CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A packetized voice telephony system comprising:

a set top box including a cable modem front end for supporting cable television services to be provided to a television coupled to the set top box; and

a voice peripheral coupled to the set top box for supporting packetized voice telephony services provided via a cable link and through the set top box.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the set top box is located within a first housing and the voice peripheral is located within a second housing.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the voice peripheral converts analog voice signals into digital voice packets.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the voice peripheral converts digital voice packets into analog voice signals.

5. The system of claim 4 wherein the digital voice packets comprise Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) packets.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein the voice peripheral includes a power supply for providing backup power to the set top box.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein the power supply comprises an uninterruptible power supply.

8. The system of claim 1 further comprising a power line coupled from the voice peripheral to the set top box for providing backup power to the set top box.

9. The system of claim 1 further comprising a data line coupling the voice peripheral with the set top box.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein the data line comprises a link selected from a group consisting of: an Ethernet link, a universal serial bus (USB) link, a home phone networking alliance (HPNA) link, an IEEE 1394 link and a wireless link.

11. The system of claim 9 further comprising a power line for providing backup power to the set top box.

12. The system of claim 11 wherein the data line and the power line comprise an integrated power/data line.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein the integrated power/data line conforms to the IEEE 1394 standard.

14. The system of claim 1 wherein the voice peripheral includes one or more telephone interfaces to interface with plain old telephone service (POTS) equipment.

15. The system of claim 1 wherein the voice peripheral includes one or more telephone interfaces to interface with an in-house phone wiring network.

16. The system of claim 1 wherein the voice peripheral provides backup power to subscriber plain old telephone service (POTS) equipment coupled to the voice peripheral.

17. The system of claim 1 wherein the voice peripheral further includes a wireless telephone interface for communicating with a wireless phone.

18. The system of claim 1 wherein the voice peripheral further includes a high audio bandwidth telephone interface for communicating with a high audio bandwidth telephone.

19. The system of claim 1 wherein the voice peripheral includes a processor unit, the processor unit including:

a protocol stack for supporting the packetized voice telephony services; and

a user interface module for providing telephony functionality to subscriber telephone equipment.

20. The system of claim 19 wherein the processor unit further includes an answering machine module for providing answering machine functionality for packetized voice calls.

21. The system of claim 1 wherein the set top box is located proximate to a television.

22. The system of claim 1 further comprising a remote control for operating the set top box.

23. The system of claim 1 wherein the set top box further comprises a receiver for receiving control signals from a remote control used to operate the set top box.

24. A packetized voice telephony system comprising:

a set top box including a cable modem front end;

a voice peripheral coupled to the set top box and supporting packetized telephony services provided via the set top box, wherein the voice peripheral converts packetized voice data received from the set top box to analog voice signals to be routed to subscriber POTS equipment coupled to the voice peripheral and converts analog voice signals from the subscriber POTS equipment coupled to the voice peripheral to packetized voice data to be routed to a cable network through the set top box.

25. The system of claim 24 wherein the voice peripheral converts Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) packets received from the set top box to the analog voice signals to be routed to the subscriber POTS equipment coupled to the voice peripheral and converts the analog voice signals from the subscriber POTS equipment coupled to the voice peripheral to VoIP packets to be routed to the cable network through the set top box.

26. The system of claim 24 wherein the voice peripheral further includes a power supply for providing backup power to the set top box.

27. A packetized voice telephony system comprising:

a set top box located within a first housing and including:

a cable modem front end for receiving cable television services and packetized voice calls, wherein the cable modem front end performs television tuning and demodulation, wherein the cable modem front end separates the cable television services and the packetized voice calls; and

a television decoder coupled to the cable modem front end; and

a voice peripheral located within a second housing external to the first housing and coupled to the set top box for receiving the packetized voice calls from the set top box and for supporting packetized voice telephony services and including one or more telephone interfaces for coupling to subscriber POTS equipment.

28. The system of claim 27 wherein the voice peripheral includes a protocol stack for converting the packetized voice calls received from the set top box to digital data streams.

29. The system of claim 28 wherein the protocol stack comprises a stack selected from the group consisting of: an H.323 protocol stack and a Media Gateway Control Protocol (MGCP) stack.

30. The system of claim 28 wherein the voice peripheral further includes a telephone interface for converting the digital data stream to an analog voice signal.

31. The system of claim 28 wherein the voice peripheral further includes a user interface module coupled to the protocol stack for providing telephony related services to POTS equipment to be coupled to the voice peripheral.

32. The system of claim 28 wherein the voice peripheral further includes a signal processing module coupled to the protocol stack.

33. The system of claim 28 wherein the voice peripheral further includes an answering machine module for providing answering machine functionality for the packetized voice calls.

34. The system of claim 27 wherein the voice peripheral further includes one or more telephone interfaces to allow coupling to POTS equipment.

35. The system of claim 27 wherein the voice peripheral and the set top box collectively share a protocol stack for converting the packetized voice calls to digital data streams.

36. The system of claim 27 wherein the voice peripheral includes a power supply for providing backup power to the set top box in the event of a power outage.

37. A voice peripheral of a packetized voice cable telephony system comprising:

a housing external to and couplable to a set top box housing, the housing including:

a processor unit adapted to be coupled to a set top box including a cable modem front end, wherein the processor unit supports packetized voice telephony services; and

one or more telephone interfaces coupled to the processor unit adapted to couple to subscriber POTS equipment.

38. The voice peripheral of claim 37 wherein the processor unit comprises:

a protocol stack for converting packetized voice calls to digital voice data stream; and

a user interface module for providing user-related features to telephones coupled to the one or more telephone interfaces.

39. The voice peripheral of claim 37 wherein the processor unit further comprises a signal processing module

40. The voice peripheral of claim 37 wherein the processor unit further includes an answering machine module for providing answering machine functionality for packetized voice calls.

41. The voice peripheral of claim 37 wherein the processor unit supports packetized voice calls using Voice over Internet Protocol.

42. The voice peripheral of claim 41 wherein the processor unit further comprises a Voice over Internet Protocol stack.

43. The voice peripheral of claim 37 wherein respective ones of the one or more telephone interfaces convert digital data streams to analog voice calls.

44. A method for providing a packetized voice telephony system comprising:

providing a set top box including a cable modem front end for supporting cable television services to be provided to a television coupled to the set top box; and

providing a voice peripheral coupled to the set top box for supporting packetized voice telephony services provided via a cable link and through the set top box.

45. A method for providing packetized voice telephony comprising:

receiving digital voice packets from a set top box including a cable modem front end that supports cable television services, wherein the digital voice packets represent a telephone call;

converting the digital voice packets to an analog voice signal; and

transmitting the analog voice signal to subscriber plain old telephone service (POTS) equipment.

46. The method of claim 45 further comprising providing user-related telephony features to the subscriber POTS equipment.

47. The method of claim 45 wherein the receiving comprises receiving Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) packets from the set top box.

48. The method of Claim 45 further comprising providing backup power to the set top box in the event of a power outage.

49. The method of Claim 45 further comprising providing backup power to the subscriber POTS equipment in the event of the power outage.

50. A method of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephony comprising:

receiving an analog voice signal from subscriber plain old telephone service (POTS) equipment representing a telephone call to a location specified by a telephone number;

converting the analog voice signal of the telephone call to digital voice packets; and

transmitting the digital voice packets to a set top box including a cable modem front end, wherein the digital voice packets will be transmitted to the location by a cable network.

51. The method of claim 50 further comprising providing user-related telephony features to the subscriber POTS equipment.

52. The method of claim 50 wherein the converting comprises converting the analog voice signal to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) packets.

53. The method of Claim 50 further comprising providing backup power to the set top box in the event of a power outage.

54. The method of Claim 50 further comprising providing backup power to the subscriber POTS equipment in the event of the power outage.